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DAS BUCH JESAJA. BERNHARD DUHM. Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht. Göttingen. 1914. Pp. xxiv, 459. 9m.

The third edition of Duhm's Commentary on Isaiah does not differ materially from its predecessor; the few corrections and additions introduced do not affect its main positions. Duhm's wealth of grammatical, critical, and exegetical matter makes his commentary an indispensable aid in the study of the mass of writings that goes under the name of "the Book of Isaiah," and the volume offers abundant opportunity for the dissenting remarks that are to be expected in dealing with a modern expository work which covers a large period of ancient life.

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JEWISH MYSTICISM. J. ABELSON, D.Litt. The Macmillan Co. 1913. Pp. x, 184. \$1.00.

At a time when in every form of thought, belief, and expression the intuitive and the immediate seem to have carried the day, it is nothing but natural that Jewish scholars should endeavor to hold up for special emphasis the mystical elements of Judaism. During the previous century, similar attempts were made with regard to its rationalistic elements, and mysticism, then decried as a false and superstitious doctrine, was deprecated as an excrescence on the body of Judaism. The reverse contention, however, of the present-day writers, and of the author of this work especially, seems to be weak in one important point. Too much attention is given to the study of books, and too little to that of persons. For to show that certain sets of ideas, generally identified in the history of thought with mysticism, have found expression in Jewish literature, does not prove the existence of a genuine type of native Jewish mysticism, unless it can be equally shown, by a study of the personal records of the reputed Jewish mystics, that the acceptance of such ideas was the result of some kind of mystical experience. Mysticism, after all, cannot be identified with any definite system of thought or belief; it is rather descriptive of a certain attitude of mind. In itself, the idea of an immanent God, for instance, is not more mystical than that of a God transcendent, neither is a theory of emanation more mystical than a theory of creation. That in the history of religion we find that men of truly mystical experience showed a decided bent towards one set of doctrines rather than to another is indeed significant; but it is equally significant that whenever

in the course of time those ideas which we associate with mysticism found their way into the all-absorbing and indiscriminate body of orthodox belief, they failed to foster true mysticism. In later-day Judaism, to mention but one example, many Cabbalistic doctrines and practices filtered into the orthodox creed and ritual without, however, affecting, for aught we know, the religious outlook of its adherents. The distinction between the dealer and the artist is by no means restricted to art alone. In mysticism too he who merely deals in it is not necessarily a mystic.

In this small volume Dr. Abelson describes Jewish mysticism at certain high states of its being rather than in the process of its becoming. About one-half of the book is devoted to the earliest period. Beginning with a brief characterization of the Essenes, in whom Jewish mysticism for the first time found articulate expression, the author passes over to a more detailed discussion of the vague references recorded in the Talmudic writings as to the existence of some indistinguishable, esoteric sects within Palestinian Judaism at the beginning of the Christian Era. He reproduces some concrete examples of their mystical doctrines, which he compares with analogous views which have come down to us in the writings of the protagonists of Hellenistic Judaism. The fifth chapter of the book takes up the *Sefer Yetzira*, which, we may assume, the author has selected as the best example of the mystical literature of the Geonic period. Although the date of the authorship of the *Sefer Yetzira* is a moot point, some placing it even as far back as the second century, historically it belongs no doubt to the Geonic period, for it was not until then that we find any definite traces of its influence as a book in the mystic literature. In the last three chapters, the author briefly sketches the contents of the *Zohar*, a book which is a syncretism of the diverse elements of the thirteenth-century Cabbalah rather than a culmination thereof. It would have added considerably to the value of the book had the author dealt more fully with the Cabbalah, its development, its divergent tendencies, its relation to the rationalistic strain within the Judaism of the time on the one hand, and to the Talmudic traditional strain on the other. The book, however, contains an exceptionally lucid statement of certain well-selected phases of Jewish mysticism. Intended for popular reading, it has the chief merit of being exceedingly well written; and while by its nature it had to confine itself to generalizations, it is blameless on the whole of any dogmatic and unsustained assertions. I can recollect only one exception. In his attempt to prove that the phrase "*lishkat hashaim*" refers to some

mystic sect (pp. 21-22), the author seems to have overshot the mark. The phrase, as translated by the author himself, literally means "chamber of the silent (or secret) ones," and is described in the Mishna (Shekalim V, 6) as a place in the temple where "fearers of sin secretly deposited their alms, from which members of the impoverished aristocracy secretly supported themselves." There is nothing in the terms "fearers of sin" and "secret" to justify the author's contention that they refer to some members of a mystic sect. The rabbinic interpretation of the scriptural verse, "a gift in secret pacifieth anger" (Prov. 21 14; Sota 5a, Baba Bathra 9 b), will sufficiently explain the application of the phrase "fearers of sin" to those who had been thus averse to make their donations in public. And as for the meaning of the term "secret" or "silent" by which the donors are called, it refers to a kind of secrecy that is akin to "anonymity" rather than to "mysticism."

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IRENÆUS OF LUGDUNUM, A STUDY OF HIS TEACHING. F. R. MONTGOMERY HITCHCOCK, M.A., D.D. With a Foreword by H. B. SWETE, D.D. Cambridge University Press. 1914. Pp. 367. 9s.

The importance of Irenæus of Lyons among early Christian writers can scarcely be exaggerated. The period of his activity as a writer (the last quarter of the 2nd century) in which Gnosticism had reached its zenith, the compass of the work that he produced in refutation of the heretical thought of his time, together with his marked ability, render him a conspicuous and important figure in the history of the early Church. His work, to quote from Professor Swete's foreword to the volume under review, "is a first effort to grapple on a large scale with the problems of the rising faith and to construct the outlines of a Christian theology. It is a storehouse of materials for the early history of the canon, the creed, and the episcopate." Irenæus' work was constructive in regard to the positive teachings of the Christian faith as well as a destructive attack on Gnostic teachings. This double attitude of his work renders it of inestimable value to the student of the Church in the early centuries.

The plan of Dr. Hitchcock's book is at once simple and natural. The opening chapter gives a sketch of the life of Irenæus, as far as his life can be constructed from the comparatively few facts that are known of him. In this part of his work the author has made